

Empire Township Meeting Minutes May 12, 2020

The Town Board meeting was held by video conference and called to order by Chairman Terry Holmes at 8:00 PM.

Present were: Terry Holmes, Jamie Elvestad, Ed Gerten, Charles Seipel, Jeff Hince, Denise Williamson, Brian Hilgardner, and Jane Kansier.

Agenda: Jamie Elvestad made a motion to approve the agenda. Ed Gerten seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Meeting Minutes: Ed Gerten made a motion to approve the minutes of the Town Board Meeting of April 28, 2020 and the Planning Commission Meeting of May 5, 2020. Jamie Elvestad seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Treasurer Report: The treasurer's report showed a General Fund Account balance of \$23,034.70 plus investments and an Escrow Account balance of \$19,809.65 plus investments. A transfer of \$20,000 from Savings to General Checking was made on 5/12/2020.

Jamie Elvestad made a motion to approve the financial report. Ed Gerten seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Visitors: The property owners at 19502 Cambria Court were present to discuss a dock that they installed several years ago on the Township pond behind their house. The property owners have received a letter from the Township requesting that the dock be removed by May 29th. The property owners reported that many residents in the neighborhood use the dock and requested that the possibility of grandfathering the dock into the Township property be considered. The Town Board expressed concerns regarding liability with the dock being on Township property. The Town Board recommended that the Township attorney be contacted to see if he can provide the Township with more information regarding the request to grandfather the dock in, otherwise the dock will need to be removed.

The Town Board reviewed a request to close Calgary Trail between 190th and 200th Streets for a graduation reception on May 30th. It was the Town Board's recommendation that because this is a busy section of street, the request to close the street be denied.

The property owners at 19374 Century Ct. and 19366 Century Ct. were present to discuss concerns regarding the Township right of way between the two properties. The resident at 19374 would like to remove a tree that has roots growing into his driveway and is not sure if the tree is owned by the Township. It was determined that the tree is on Township property and therefore the Township will be responsible for removing the tree and grinding the stump. The property owners requested that this area be also seeded as there is quite a bit of exposed dirt. The Township will place soil and seed in the area if all private belongings are removed from the Township owned property. The property owners indicated that they would maintain the seed to make sure that it grows properly once it is planted.

Bills to be Paid: Jamie Elvestad made a motion to approve the attached list of bills in the amount of \$90,715.90. Ed Gerten seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Committee Reports

Maintenance / Sewer and Water / Road and Bridges

Jeff Hince reported that there is a leak on Cambria Court that will be fixed, and the Met Council is done hauling sludge from the treatment plant.

The Town Board reviewed aerials of potential spots in the Township where Pheasants Forever could potentially plant seed that would be beneficial to monarchs and bees. Jeff Hince reported that an area south of the Cabrilla Townhomes would be the best location. There was concern that all of the dogs going through the area would prevent Pheasants from using this vegetation for habitation. The Township maintenance department would need to spray what is there now so that soybeans can be planted before it is turned to plants that benefit bees and monarchs. The Town Board recommended that Hince decide whether the maintenance department would have time to work on this proposal.

The Town Board viewed a photo of an old Township road grader that was recently brought back to the shop. Hince would like to display it at the Maintenance Facility yard.

It was reported that the landscaping at the Providence Townhome Association area has been complete and done to Hince's satisfaction. Brian Hilgardner concurred that the landscaping has been installed according to plan.

Park & Rec

Denise Williamson reported that playground facilities and the Public Works Rental facility are currently closed. It was reported that several other communities have opened their playgrounds. After discussion, the Town Board recommended that the Township playgrounds and portable toilets be reopened with signage indicating that they are open "at your own risk". The reopening of the Public Works Facility and Ballfields will depend on guidance from the State of Minnesota.

The Town Board recommended that Park & Rec Committee meetings resume at their regularly scheduled times.

It was reported that it has been brought to the attention of the Township that property owners seem to be clearing land and planting a garden on Township Property between the private backyard and the trail. The Town Board recommended the property owners be contacted to prevent a garden from being installed on the property.

Engineering

Brian Hilgardner reported that the bids for the installation of the 170th Street and Highway 3 roundabout came in at approximately \$600,000 less than anticipated. The name of the contractor that was awarded the bid has not yet been made public. Work should start in early July.

Work is still being done to finalize the design of the propose roundabout at Highway 3 and 66.

Planning

Al Singer, Dakota County Land Conservation Manager, reported on the draft Dakota County Land Conservation Plan. The Town Board reviewed the plan and related maps of proposed conservation land. The Town Board reported that they had issue with the amount of land identified in the plan and would not support additional land being placed into conservation outside of the immediate Vermillion River corridor. Mr. Singer recommended that the Township send notice of their opposition to Dakota County and it will be considered. The Town Board will work with Jane Kansier in putting together a letter.

It was reported that things are moving along well with final approval of the Empire Township Comprehensive Plan. The Township should receive official approval from the Met Council soon. Ed Gerten requested information on language that would pertain to certain parcels that have been discussed at the Planning Commission Meetings be researched now that the Comprehensive Plan is nearing completion.

It was reported that the proper landscaping has not been installed on the FastSun solar project as outlined in the landscaping plan for the project. The Planning Commission has requested that a letter to the solar array owner be sent giving them until July to complete the landscaping, otherwise escrow funds will be used to complete it.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

It was reported that the citation charge for nuisance violations needs to be a flat fee. Deputy Steffel indicated that violators typically get a verbal warning before a citation is issued. If any citations go unpaid, they will be brought to the Township's attorney for action. It was recommended that the charging fee be set at \$75.00 per violation. Jamie Elvestad made a motion to adopt Resolution 2020-5A; Setting the Payable Charging Fee for Violations of Ordinance No. 280 (Empire Township Nuisance Ordinance). Ed Gerten seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

The Town Board reviewed the agreement between Dakota County and Empire Township for reimbursement through the Rural Solid Waste Abatement Grant Program. Ed Gerten made a motion to approve the agreement. Jamie Elvestad seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

It was reported that the proposed Paypal system for credit card processing would allow for refunds to a customer's credit card at no cost. The Town Board recommended that Seipel also check into other credit card processing vendors.

It was reported that the Vermillion River watershed district is looking for ideas from cities and townships in the watershed for potential improvement projects. The Town Board did not have any projects in mind at this time.

FYI:

It was reported that some residents are disbursing information about a spring cleanup in Empire Township. This cleanup is not affiliated in anyway with the Township.

The Town Board reviewed a notice from MCES on Preliminary Wastewater Charges for 2021 and from MN DOT regarding the delayed installation of new railroad crossing equipment on 170th Street.

The Town Board Meeting adjourned at 10:05 P.M.

Terry Holmes Chairman, Town Board

Charles Seipel, Clerk – Treasurer